

BIRTH-DAY POEM

FOR

JAMES MAXWELL,

WRITTEN BY HIMSELF,

ON MAY THE IXth, M,DCC,XCVIII.

WHEN HE ENTERED THE LXXIX YEAR OF HIS AGE, IN A VERY FRAIL CON-
 DITION, AND IN GREAT EXPECTATION OF HIS DEATH.

I.

MY Years are arrived almost to fourscore,
 How transient, alas, and how vain!
 The days of my strength and my vigour are o'er,
 And death is prefat'd by my pain.

II.

What may be the issue the Lord only knows,
 For Life and Death are in his hand:
 And he at his pleasure can thereof dispose,
 And none can his purpose with-stand.

III.

Death is like a vessel that's going to sea,
 Without either rudder or mast,
 And from uncertainty thus lanch away,
 And know not where they must be cast.

IV.

But I have a PILOT infinitely wise,
 Almighty and strong to defend.
 No rovers whatever can make us a prize,
 While we on our PILOT depend.

V.

Like Noah I therefore most cheerfully go,
 Soon as his blest summons I hear,
 A-board of his BARK where no danger I know,
 No enemies there dare appear.

VI.

My warfare is over, or near at an end,
 And soon I must put to the Sea,
 I know that my PILOT will safely defend,
 And drive all my dangers away.

VII.

His promises fill me with courage quite bold,
 Since I have believed his word;
 I know that he of me will not quit his hold,
 But courage and strength will afford.

VIII.

But why art thou confident, why void of fear?
 When Death seems approaching so nigh,
 Can ought thou hast acted or suff'r'd while here,
 Thy soul before GOD justify?

IX.

No; far be it from me! I know better things,
 My confidence then would be vain,
 Since Adam offended no hope to us springs,
 From works or from suff'rings of pain.

X.

CHRIST (the second Adam) can only atone,
 By suff'ring the penalty due
 For breaking the law which all mankind have done,
 This was by a covenant new.

XI.

He took our frail nature and died in the stead
 Of all who believe in his Name;
 But all who reject him, in sin they are dead,
 And thus no salvation can claim.

XII.

Now this is my confidence, this is the rock,
 Whereon stands my well-grounded hope,
 I know that his promises cannot be broke,
 And none shall my confidence stop.

XIII.

But do not most people of mankind believe,
 Who yet are but Christians in name,
 Do they not most gladly this doctrine receive,
 Yet glory in sin and in shame?

XIV.

'Tis true there are many who say they believe,
 And think they are Christians indeed,
 While they but themselves and their neighbours
 deceive,
 While nothing they see that they need.

XV.

But those who believe have a witness within,
 Imparted to them from above
 They are not in love nor in league with their sin,
 They're drawn to their duty by love.

XVI.

Now this is my confidence, this is my hope,
 I'm sure in whom I have believ'd,
 And therefore my confidence no man shall stop,
 I know I cannot be deceiv'd.

XVII.

All earthly enjoyments I henceforth resign,
 And welcome the summons of Death,
 I know that my Glorious REDEEMER is mine,
 And to HIM I yield up my breath.

XVIII.

But if 'tis his will that I longer shall live
 In poverty, sickness and pain,
 Whate'er he thinks fit to withhold or to give,
 I hope I shall never complain.

XIX.

And whoso administer'd freely to me,
 I hope he will amply reward;
 May his door of mercy to them open be,
 And none of them from it debarr'd.

XX.

If any have wrong'd me in thought word or deed,
 I pray that they may be forgiven,
 And may they from all their transgressions be freed
 If it be Thy will, Gracious Heav'n.